

# preservation issues

NEWS FOR THE PRESERVATION COMMUNITY

MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM

★ Vol. 6, No. 1 ★

## CCC Company 1743: The Thunderbirds

*"Idle through no fault of your own, you were enrolled from city and rural homes and offered an opportunity to engage in healthful, outdoor work on forest, park and soil conservation projects of definite practical value to all the people in the nation. The promptness with which you seized this opportunity to engage in honest work, the willingness with which you have performed your daily tasks and the fine spirit you have shown in winning the respect of the communities in which your camps have been located, merits the admiration of the entire country. You, and the men who have guided and supervised your efforts, have cause to be proud of the record the CCC has made in the development of sturdy manhood and in the initiation and prosecution of a conservation program of unprecedented proportions." – Excerpt from a message from Franklin D. Roosevelt to members of the CCC read over NBC network at 7:30 p.m., Friday, April 17, 1936*

The Civilian Conservation Corps (better known as the CCC) was one of several relief programs developed during the great depression of the 1920s and 1930s. Under the administration of the U.S. Army and the National Park Service, the CCC developed state and national parks nationwide. Much of the construction done by these young men more than 60 years ago in many of Missouri's state parks and historic sites is still in use. Like most aspects of society at that time, the CCC was a segregated organization. Only one black CCC company, the 1743rd, worked in Missouri's state

parks. (Two others, the 3748th and the 3760th, worked on non-park projects in Missouri.)

First organized on April 15, 1933, as Company 694 at Jefferson Barracks in St. Louis, the unit was initially sent to Pierre, S.D. where it was redesignated as Company 1743. The unit's first assignment in Missouri was at Lake Contrary, just outside of St. Joseph, in October 1933.

On June 4, 1934, the men and officers of the 1743rd were ordered to Washington State Park near DeSoto in Washington County. There they built Camp Thunderbird (named after the



PHOTO: NICK DECKER

Stone thunderbird detail on dining hall, built by CCC Company 1743 ca 1934, at Washington State Park near DeSoto, Missouri.

mythical creatures that appear frequently in the local petroglyphs), established the camp newspaper *Thunderbird Rumblyings*, and began a five-year project to develop the state park. In nearby DeSoto, the inhabitants of Camp Thunderbird quickly developed

(See CCC, Page 6)

### Inside

National Register Listings . . . . .	2
Readership Survey Results . . . . .	3
Thank You, Readers . . . . .	3
Reflections on Attending Lincoln School . . . . .	4
Park Rustic Architecture . . . . .	5
Dates to Remember . . . . .	8
Archaeology Week . . . . .	8

January/February 1996

## National Register Listings: Ethnic Heritage-Black, 1993-1996

The following properties have been listed in the National Register of Historic Places for their significance under Ethnic Heritage-Black, 1993-1996.

**Benjamin Banneker School** (*top right*), Parkville, Platte County. Listed 9/22/95. The Benjamin Banneker School is apparently one of only a few surviving brick, one-room segregated schools in the state. The Banneker School was the first building constructed exclusively for the use of African-American students in the Platte County community. Although two additional segregated schools were subsequently constructed, the 1885 Banneker School is the only one extant. The school also represents the efforts of the African American community and of Park College founder and free soil advocate George S. Park and college president John A. McAfee to assure educational facilities and opportunity to all the children of the community, within the framework and restrictions of legal segregation. The period of significance extends from 1885, with the construction of the school, to ca 1902, when the one-room building was replaced by a larger, similarly named, building.

**Bethel A.M.E. Chapel** (*middle right*), Louisiana, Pike County. Listed 7/28/95. Completed in 1884, the Bethel A.M.E. Chapel is Louisiana's last remaining active African-American social institution. The church served as the spiritual, social and visual focal point of Louisiana's African-American community. In addition to its religious function, the chapel offered social activities and assistance to members and non-members; sponsored literacy training for younger members; provided leadership; and served as a meeting place.

**Washington School** (*bottom right*), Monroe City, Monroe County. Listed 12/29/94. The Washington School was built for and used to educate Monroe City's African-American students from its construction in 1937 until the end of segregated education. Located on the site of an earlier African American school and one of only three such schools in Monroe County, the building was erected with funds provided by grants from the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Public Works Administration (PWA). The school also stands as an example of the contributions of Depression-era, New Deal programs to numerous small Missouri communities such as Monroe City. In addition, the Washington School is a rare example of an architect-designed African-American public school, built from plans drawn by the St. Louis firm of Bonsack and Pearce, whose commis-



PHOTO STEVE MITCHELL



PHOTO MARK HONNISTETER



PHOTO RICHARD TAYLOR

sions included churches and schools in many parts of Missouri. One example is the white public school in Monroe City constructed at the same time as the Washington School.

The following properties have been approved for nomination to the National Register by the Missouri Advisory Council on Historic Preservation:

**Lincoln School** (*top right*), Vandalia, Audrain County. The Lincoln School is at least the fourth building constructed for use as a school for African-American students in Vandalia. It was constructed in 1927 by the Walsh Company, a local construction and brick-making firm, on land donated by the Ellis Brothers, Vandalia pharmacists. The two-story brick building is an unusually large example of an African-American school located in a small Missouri town. The school originally housed grades one through 12; eventually high school students were bused to Mexico, but the school continued in use for elementary grades until integration in 1955.

**Second Baptist Church** (*bottom right*), Neosho, Newton County. Built in 1896, the Second Baptist Church is one of the few remaining public institutions in Neosho that represents the African-American heritage of the Newton County community. The vernacular building with Late Gothic Revival style affinities was founded and supported by men and women who held significant roles in the African American community; the pastors of the church provided leadership and service to their community, as well as other Missouri communities. Founded in the aftermath of the Civil War, the Second Baptist Church still stands as a center for Neosho's African-American culture, serving as the focus for community events and social functions, as well as a meeting hall and cultural center. — *Steve Mitchell*



*This historic post card, ca 1930s, shows Lincoln School students (left to right) Harold Brice, Bezolia Salmon, Willetta Weir, and Robert Holman.*



PHOTO MARY JEAN BAKER

## Readership Survey Results

**T**hank you for your response to our readership survey. The results as of November 30 have been tabulated, and comments have been noted. An impressive 90 percent of respondents read all or most of each issue.

Our quest for improvement will consider suggestions to improve the quality of the photographs. Although several readers pleaded for color, the cost increase of adding it was recognized. To get larger photographs and show interior detail, many suggested increasing the size of the newsletter.

You wanted more diversity, more emphasis on rural or non-major cities; you suggested more "how-to-do-it" restoration project features or case studies, and tourism advice through features focusing on historic sites, national register properties and local landmarks.

Many gave excellent marks, a few suggested good technical revision, and some felt a little humor would be nice.

For a compilation of all the survey results, call (314) 751-7860 or write to the return address. — *Marjorie Cox*

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Editor: Karen Grace

## Thank You, Readers

**T**hank you, Preservation Issues readers! The Historic Preservation Program has received information on 96 Lustron houses in Missouri of which 95 may still exist (one was demolished in February, 1995). If the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* article of Dec. 19, 1982, is correct, there were only 97 Lustron houses sold in Missouri, so we have a fairly complete inventory.

I wish to thank everyone who contributed information. A special commendation goes to Thomas Bakersmith of Maplewood, Mo., who contributed information on 82 Missouri examples. — *Lee Gilleard*



## Reflections on Attending Lincoln School

Not often do many of us have the opportunity of sharing memories of our past. For that reason, it is a pleasure to share my memories of Lincoln School to assist in listing the school in the National Register of Historic Places.

I attended Lincoln School from September 1936 through May of 1943, completing grades one through eight. The high school grades had been discontinued and high school students were transported by bus to Garfield High School in Mexico, Mo., for grades nine through 12.

Since there were small numbers of students in each grade at Lincoln School, we easily fit into the building. For example students in grades one through four sat in grade rows in the second floor classroom on the southeast corner of the building; students in grades five through eight sat in grade rows in the second floor classroom on the southwest corner of the building; and students in grades nine through 12 sat in grade rows in the northeast corner of the building. There were two classrooms on the first floor of the building that were reserved for mathematics, home economics and other classes.

All students met in the largest room located on the northwest corner of the building on the second floor each morning to recite the **Pledge of Allegiance** to the flag of the United States of America. We then sang the **Star-Spangled Banner**. Any announcements to be heard were read, we sang **Lift Every Voice and Sing**, and students left for their classrooms.

I also remember older and higher grade students teasing the younger and lower grade students as we filed out. This inspired us to strive to become upper grade students, thus gaining the respect and admiration that went along with age and accomplishment.

As I recall all students with good behavior were permitted to recess at the same time but were encouraged to "play" in our own grade levels, thus avoiding any difficulties that could arise

between older and younger students. This was usually accomplished easily as most students when not supervised by the instructional staff were corralled by an older sibling, relative or friend and told to stay in their own peer group.

There were two teachers for the elementary grades and the principal who taught the high school students. I believe later another teacher was added to teach in the higher grades. The principal also held conferences with parents, conducted the assemblies, met with the superintendent of school and meted out punishment deserved by older students. All in all, we were a conforming group of students who kept our mischief to minor infractions with a few exceptions.

The school year usually began the first of September, skipping Labor Day, and ended the last week of May the following year. I believe we followed the school calendar dictated by the state board of education. Our school day began at 9:00 in the morning and ended at 3:30 or 4:00 in the afternoon, which was uniform with most schools in the state. However, local custom at the time sometimes dictated the school calendar.

The assembly room on the second floor where we assembled each morning took on a special importance when there was a play, musical, baccalaureate or graduation held. I recall the stage, which could be closed with heavy purple drapes when desired, grew smaller and smaller as I grew older and taller. I suspect this was true for most other students as well. It was here that parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, your minister and other friends came to see a student performance of any kind from first grade through graduation. There was usually a Halloween party for students and families as well as a Christmas play or celebration of some sort for presidential holidays, etc. Some activities involving food and drink were held in one of the larger rooms on the first floor of the building. This room

was just off the kitchen, had a concrete floor that had been sealed and painted and thus could be easily cleaned. It also was near the boys and girls bathrooms, which were located on the first floor.

The weather in this part of the state was usually not severe, but the building was comfortably heated with a steam boiler that fed all the steam radiators. If there was a malfunction of the boiler, a school holiday was instituted. This always delighted the students, but was not necessarily welcomed by the parents who greatly desired we be provided a quality education.

I cannot express the gratitude I feel for the education and social growth experiences Lincoln School, the instructional staff and the community provided me. The high expectations of the staff and administration were clearly and consistently demonstrated and the caring expressions of older students and the community combined to motivate us to always strive to do our best academically.

The basic education I received at Lincoln School allowed me to complete a high school curriculum at Garfield High School. I was graduated valedictorian of my class in May 1947, was awarded a Curators Scholarship to Lincoln University of Jefferson City, and have since completed graduate school at the University of Denver. I have also been fortunate enough to complete numerous post-graduate classes and seminars as a family therapist at leading universities and medical schools in the country.

I have also had the privilege of serving on several state mental health boards and am most proud of having served a twelve-year term as a member of the board of trustees of a large teaching hospital. Two of those years were served as chairman of the board.

Again, all of my success has been a result of the opportunity given me by my family, the caring instructional staff and the community that made up the Lincoln School of my youth. — *Forest W. Price*

# MIS S O U R I

## Historic Architecture

### Depression Era Park Rustic Architecture 1933-1942

#### *Characteristics:*

- ☐ Rustic park designs were intended to blend into their surrounding environments in both a natural and cultural sense; at their best, these designs appeared to be a natural outgrowth of their park settings.
- ☐ Buildings were simple in design and small in scale and intended to be practical and efficient. The construction was to be straightforward with "no faking."
- ☐ Colors such as warm browns were employed to subordinate buildings in their settings.
- ☐ Horizontal lines and low silhouettes were emphasized.
- ☐ The Park Rustic Style was applied to a variety of buildings and structures within local and state park settings including dining lodges, picnic shelters, tourist cabins, group camps, bath houses, comfort stations, restrooms, lookout shelters, entrance gates, stone bridges, and even park offices and administration and service buildings.
- ☐ Construction timbers and stone were obtained locally and were worked in a rough form reflecting native hewing, sawing, and dressing techniques.
- ☐ The handmade rustic look typically reflected the labor-intensive manner in which buildings and structures were erected – usually by large crews of enrollees of New Deal programs such as the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the Works Progress Administration (WPA).

PHOTO NICK DECKER



*The Dining Lodge at Washington State Park, built by black CCC workers in 1939, reflects the rustic park architecture design ideals of employing native materials in a rough form (in this case, local hand-worked stone) and reflecting the local cultural traditions. (Note the thunderbird carving below the chimney that comes from one of the Indian petroglyphs located in the park. Detail Page 1.) – James Denny*

(CCC, from Page 1)

a reputation of being polite, well-behaved and hard-working young men whose roads, trails and buildings showed a high level of craftsmanship.

Company 1743 was next ordered to Mark Twain State Park just outside the village of Florida, in Monroe County. Before sending a black unit to a new assignment, the army allowed local residents the opportunity to formally object to the move through a petition process. Some residents in the Florida vicinity sent a petition that stated: "... we do not desire to have a colored Civilian Conservation Corps Camp established in Florida ..."

Not everyone in the area was of the same opinion, however. With the assistance of local businessmen, the Missouri State Park Board arranged a bus tour of Washington State Park for 22 citizens from the Florida area. Those on the tour had an opportunity to see first hand the quality of the 1743rd's work and to speak with residents and businessmen from DeSoto. As a result of this trip, the Army received two new petitions; one was from the Chamber of Commerce, the American Legion and the city council of DeSoto asking that Camp Thunderbird not be dissolved, and that company 1743 be allowed to remain at Washington State Park. The second began: "We, the undersigned citizens residing within three miles of Mark Twain State Park, hereby certify that we have no objections to the as-

signment of a Negro company of CCC boys to the CCC camp in Mark Twain State Park. We are extremely anxious for the park to be developed as rapidly as possible."

As a result of this petition, the men and officers of CCC Company 1743 were transferred to Mark Twain State Park on December 1, 1939.

The National Park Service and the Missouri State Park Board had developed an ambitious master plan for Mark Twain State Park. Over a projected six-year period, CCC Company 1743 was to be assigned the task of building a lodge or hotel with outlying cabins, campgrounds, several picnic areas, a basketball field, trails and roads throughout the 1200-acre park, fishing and boating facilities on the Salt River that flowed through the park, a museum dedicated to Mark Twain and removal of the author's birth cabin back to its original location in the village of Florida. One interesting feature of this early master plan was a large lake that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was to build for flood control and to generate hydropower.

Early phases of the master plan included clearing and razing a number of farm structures on the 1000-acre addition the park had recently acquired. The CCC workers also developed a water system that served not only their camp (Camp Tom Sawyer) but also the Buzzard's Roost picnic area. They built trails and roads throughout the facility, developed picnic areas, and constructed a park office and maintenance building.

When the United States became involved in World War II, CCC camps all across the country were disbanded and the men and officers transferred to active army units. Camp Tom Sawyer and Company 1743 were disbanded in July 1942.

Reminders of the

1743rd can still be found in Mark Twain State Park. The most obvious, perhaps, are the stone and timber picnic shelter and entrance sign at Buzzard's Roost picnic area. The small lake and a few of the buildings used in Camp Tom Sawyer, the largest of which was the mess hall, were later used by thousands of 4-H members who attended Camp Clemens during the 1950s and 1960s. The park maintenance complex and the residences for the park superintendent and the historic site administrator are now located where these camps once stood. Behind the site administrator's residence is an old barn now used to store lumber; scrawled on one of the walls are the names and dates of a few of the young black men who helped to build the park. When the new maintenance area was completed, the original maintenance building was turned over to Mark Twain Birthplace State Historic Site.

To some extent, the original list of projects that the 1743rd was expected to complete in six years has continued to influence current development in the park and historic site. On June 5, 1960, a museum containing the small two-room frame house in which Mark Twain was born was dedicated and opened to the public. In September 1984 an 18,000-acre lake named after Mark Twain was dedicated; the lake levels are remarkably similar to those depicted in the master plan drawn up in the 1930s.

Records and information on CCC Company 1743 are sadly lacking. Photographs, letters, diaries, copies of the *Thunderbird Ramblings* and personal interviews with any surviving members of Co. 1743 would be very helpful in learning more about this important unit. Anyone willing to share information or artifacts on the unit can contact the Missouri State Museum at Room B-2, State Capitol Building, Jefferson City, MO 65101, or (314) 751-2854. — *John Cuning*

*John Cuning is the director of the Missouri State Museum and site administrator at Jefferson Landing State Historic Site.*



*The Thunderbird Ramblers.*



# The Men of the 1743rd



*Left to right: **First Row:** John Napier, Charles Steward, Dennis Lee, George Case, Benjamin Chase, John Edwards, Ray Hendred, Robert Campbell, Phil Meachum; **Second Row:** Mormon Keaton, Sellie Bruitt, Clarence Prince, John Davis, William Baker, Roderick Kingsberry, Wallace Hester, Henry Kiles, Thurman Moss, Edward Mucherson; **Third Row:** Robert Cambridge, Jack Tapp, Charles Williams, Clarence Nichols, James Dukes, Lafayette Alston, Otis Hutchinson, William Allen, Rufus Arrington, Oliver Cobb, Robert Burgett, Harrison Brooks; **Fourth Row:** Jessie Rayford, Richard Davis, William Hardin, John Beasley, Lee Clark, J.C. Romas, David Sains, John Conley, Archie Humphrey, Melvin Smith, Raymond Kitchin, William Fisher, Robert Barnes, Melvin Smith, Lewis Harris; **Fifth Row:** Phillip Carter, Elmer Mizner, Earl Howe, Gerald Holt, Melvin Wansley, Richard Kemps, Virgil Patton, Percy Patterson, Joe Gillum, Robert Coby, Quinton Whitaker, Howard Jennings, Manzell Riney, John Wright, Frank Ousley, Lawrence Davis, Russell Goodwin, Freddie Turner.*



*Photos from the  
Official Annual,  
Missouri-Kansas  
District Civilian  
Conservation  
Corps, 7th Corps  
Area, Fort Leaven-  
worth, Kansas 1937*

*Left to right: **First Row:** Robert Rollins, Isaiah Steward, Melvin Banks, Walter Allen, Joseph Chitwood, Potas Newman, Raymond Kennerly, William Shannon, James Strong, William Robinson, Clifford Baynham; **Second Row:** Lucius Took, Richard Smith, Vernon Simmons, Ernest Mack, Eugene Bentley, Curtis McWilliams, Russell Fanniel, Russell Burnett, Andrew Pittman, Emmett Sparks, Oliver Caldwell, Bobbie Vermont; **Third Row:** Sidney Peeler, Cleo Johnson, Lawrence Cook, James Montgomery, Edward Stamps, Frank Scott, George Benson, William Vantreece, Vernon Wallace, Earl Terry, James Lamarque, Herbert McGee, Roosevelt Powell, James Brooks, William Mason, Walter Curd; **Fourth Row:** Nathan Washington, Charles Grimes, George Hammond, Stanley McKinzie, Clifton Drake, Mack Taylor, James Davis, Homer Steel, Willis Draffen, James L. Fisher, Willie Parks, Doris Kinney, Winston Jones, William Cooper, Muriel Cox; **Fifth Row:** Robert Cusingbury, Grady Johnson, Floyd Matthews, Lloyd Yokley, Ellion Thomas, Maurice Jackson, Raymond Bingham, Edward Thomas, Charles F. Evans, Herbert Howard, Benjamin Harrison, Howard Williams, Melvin Brame, Wilbert Poindexter, James Hamilton, George Draffen.*

## Missouri Archaeology Week April 28-May 5, 1996

**P**reparations have been underway since before July to organize Missouri's first statewide archaeology awareness week event next spring. The event is made possible by support from a Missouri Department of Natural Resources' Historic Preservation Fund grant and matching contributions from Washington University. Although all work is being done on a voluntary basis, funds are targeted for a program brochure that will list statewide events (lectures, exhibits, films etc.) and a full-color poster. A committee of professional Missouri archaeologists around the state is pulling together programs, lectures, exhibits, films etc. for various meeting spaces. Some museums, libraries, and university anthropology departments will do their own inhouse programming but need to contact the Missouri Archaeology Week coordinator if they wish to have their programs listed in the brochure.

If you are interested in submitting a program for approval to be included in this event, please contact the program coordinator:

**Carol Diaz-Granados**, Dept. of Anthropology, Washington University, 1 Brookings Drive, St. Louis MO 63130-4899, phone (314) 935-5252, fax: (314) 935-8535.

## preservation issues

Missouri Department of Natural Resources  
Historic Preservation Program  
P.O. Box 176  
Jefferson City, MO 65102

## Dates to Remember

**Missouri Advisory Council on Historic Preservation**, March 8. For more information call (314) 751-7858.

**February is Black History Month.** Check local media for events statewide.

**More than 20 state historic sites** will have programs and exhibits for Black History Month. Call the Department of Natural Resources toll free at 1-800-334-6946 for details.

**Black Heritage events**, February, in the Kansas City area. Call the Kansas City Convention and Visitors' Bureau at (816) 221-5242 for a brochure.

**Black Heritage events** in the Greater St. Louis area. Call the Landmarks Association of St. Louis at (314) 421-6474 for information.

**Missouri Alliance for Historic Preservation Annual Statewide Preservation Conference**, April 13-14, St. Joseph. For more information call (314) 634-7995.

*Right, recent photo of Lookout Shelter. Photo by Judith Deel.*



*Left, Lookout Shelter under construction at Washington State Park, 1936. Photo courtesy National Archives, Washington, D.C.*

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